

Local Sustainability and Community: Issues of Social Capital, Governance, and Capacity.



by

Christian Martin

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Centre for Environmental Studies
School of Geography and Environmental Studies
University of Tasmania
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or graduate diploma in any University or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.



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Abstract

This research was based on the notion that initiatives involving communities at the local level are essential to advancing the sustainability agenda. Three communities of the Community Precinct Program, a community representation framework implemented and maintained by the Glenorchy City Council (GCC), provided case studies by which to explore how the sustainability agenda may be locally operationalised. The development and implementation of a local State of the Environment Report (SoER) process was used as a strategy by which to examine the uptake of sustainability principles by members of the community. Inhibitors and facilitators to the adoption of sustainability emerging in the state and civil spheres during the SoER process were examined by using a combination of questionnaires, participant observations, and interviews with community members and GCC representatives. Issues of social capital, governance and capacity emerged as central. Specifically, the relationships among social capital, community capacity, and sense of community emerged as significant in the ability of precinct committees to initiate projects enhancing sustainability. Findings also indicated that while the Precinct Program does enhance participation in decision-making processes, thanks largely to the efforts of community leaders and the improved link between the community and Council, tensions among Council representatives, and the Program's lack of focus undermine its substantial benefits. Increasing the understanding of sustainability issues within the community and Council is also a challenge, with the sustainability rhetoric evident in Council documents rarely being implemented in practice.

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